

PRESS RELEASE

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Anchorage Airport Purchases Aquatic Plant Harvester

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(Anchorage)— The water quality in Lakes Hood and Spenard is continually improving since the implementation of the Airport’s Water Body Recovery Plan in 2001. With this water quality improvement there has been an increase in aquatic vegetation that can be a nuisance and interfere with floatplane operations. This has necessitated the purchase of an Aquatic Plant Harvester to control the vegetation.

The Harvester was selected as the primary method of controlling vegetation in the open water because it achieves the desired goal of reducing vegetation yet leaves vegetation on the shoreline intact which helps protect against erosion. Additionally, harvesters cause minimal environmental concern. It is a barge mounted machine designed to cut and collect aquatic vegetation. Harvesters are fitted with a pick up conveyor at the forward end of the machine which can be lowered up to six feet deep to cut weeds. As the machine moves forward through the water, one horizontal and two vertical cutter bars sever the vegetation and then the cut weeds fall back onto a continuously revolving conveyor that drops them into the storage hold.

“This is the busiest floatplane base in the world and it’s the Airports goal that it be the safest and best base possible. The new Harvester will help the floatplane operators,” said Morton V. Plumb Jr., Airport Director.

There are approximately 500 floatplane slips located on the lakes. The entire shoreline of Lake Hood and the east and south shoreline of Lake Spenard are leased to floatplane operators for mooring or parking aircraft.

Lakes Hood and Spenard were originally two separate bog lakes. By 1940, the land between the lakes was excavated to form a channel. Floatplane moorings were added during the 1950s. A second channel was dredged in 1975, creating an island between the two channels, named Gull Island.

Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport encompasses 4,500 acres. The surface area of Lakes Hood and Spenard combined is 208 acres and the mean depth of the lakes is 7.9 feet.

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